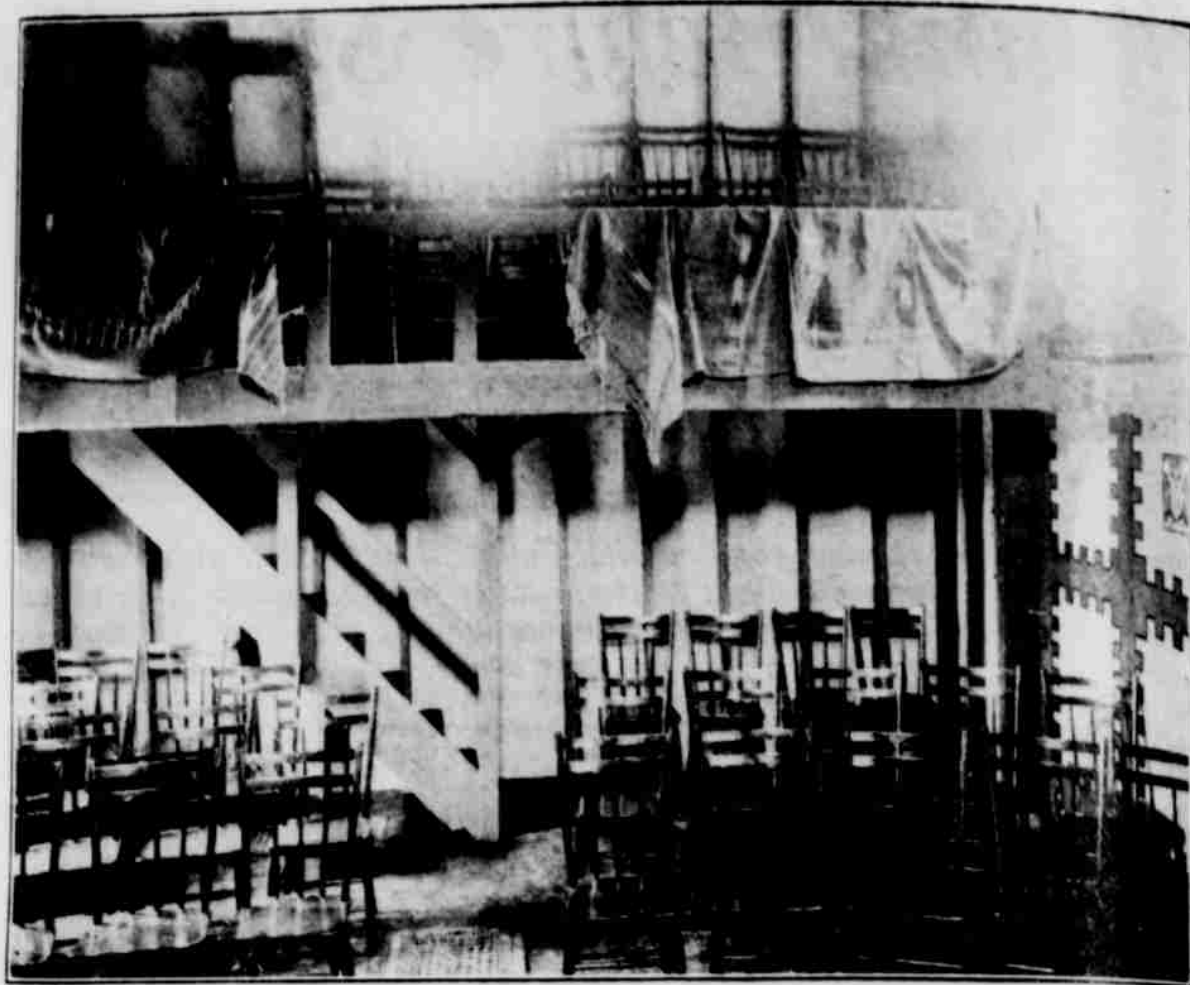




This is an exterior view of the barn that has been changed to a theater.



This shows the interior of the barn used for a theater and the haymow used as a balcony.

## A Barn Becomes the Community Theater

THERE are little theaters and little theaters, but the smallest in the world is claimed to be in a barn at Ypsilanti, Michigan. Five years ago, fifteen people of that town decided that bridge parties and reception evenings meant time more or less wasted. They therefore organized a drama society, the purpose of which was to meet at stated intervals for the reading of plays and the serious study of the drama as a constructive force in American life.

Members were added and the interest became so keen that it was decided to attempt the production of some of the better of the one act plays that had been read. A small hall was rented in which several performances were given, but because of the poor stage and insufficient lighting facilities, it was deemed necessary to have a theater better adapted for the class of plays being presented.

A small barn, eighteen feet wide and thirty-six feet long, at the rear of the Ladies' Library was purchased and remodeled into a play-house. The money was advanced by a local banker who was one of the original organizers and who is a talented amateur actor. An auditorium twelve feet by eighteen feet, with balcony constructed from part of the haymow, was made to seat comfortably fifty people. The space between the rafters in the interior of the barn was covered with wall board. A stage was built which has a depth of twenty-five feet from curtain to sky dome, and a proscenium arch 9x15 feet. The interior of the barn was then painted, decorated, and hung with old English lanterns. While the exterior of the play-house and the auditorium are Elizabethan in appearance, the stage itself is as modern as the most advanced stage-lighting devices can make it. With its borders, floods, spots, and dimmers controlled by cleverly constructed switches, any desired lighting effect can be secured.

This electrical equipment was installed at an expense of about \$2,000 and has been pronounced by experts as unsurpassed within its limits by any stage in the larger and more elaborate metropolitan theaters.

There is a basement under the entire building where are located two large dressing rooms, a green room and a furnace room. The green room which contains an electric stove, running water, table and cupboards, is easily converted into a kitchen. After every regular performance, a light lunch is served to both audience and players on the stage which for the time is changed into a very delightful reception room.

So much for the play-house itself. Although it is quite unique, the real distinction and significance of the Ypsilanti players is that they are self-supporting and are working toward the ideal of a municipal theater. At least five sets of one act plays are given annually. Fifty season tickets are sold at \$5 each and each of the forty-five members pays \$5 annual dues. With this yearly income of \$475, the organization is paying the interest and small amounts on the principal which it borrowed to pay for its home and equipment.

Every member is subject to call for the manual labor of scene shifting, as well as the more exciting pleasure of playing the star actor or actress in some love comedy. Not only excellent histrionic talent has been discovered among the membership, but scene painters and period furniture makers as well. If the committee in charge of selecting the casts for the various plays knows of some one in the town outside of the membership, who they feel will fill the part better than one of the members, they invite the better actor or actress to take part in the play.

Each play is studied far in advance of presentation; posters, stage settings, costumes, and scenery designed, and if the necessary stage furniture cannot be borrowed from members or local furniture dealers, it is designed and manufactured by the players.

Only one act plays are given—two or three at a performance. By doing this, a great many more are on

the program than would be possible if one play of three or four acts were attempted; there being the added advantage that no part is so heavy as to become burdensome. A professional director has been employed but once, and only for one week, to assist in the preparation of a special program. At all other times the directing has been done by one of the local players.

Among the plays given since the play-house was occupied three years ago and which show the versatility of the players are:

"The Workhouse Ward" (Lady Gregory), "Helena's Husband" (Philip Moeller), "Pierre Patelin" (Medieval French Farce), "The Glittering Gate and the Lost Silk Hat" (Lord Dunsany), "The Clod" (Lewis Beach), "Suppressed Desires" (George Crawford and Susan Glaspell), "Trifles" (Susan Glaspell), "Temperament" (Mary Aldis), "Another Way Out and Patent Applied For" (Lawrence Langner), "The Swan Song" (Anton Tchekoff), "Two Crooks and a Lady" (Eugene Pillot).

Some original one act plays by the players themselves, which have been played by them, will be published in the near future. Among these is R. Clyde Ford's—"A Bit of Art."

The players are becoming a large factor in the artistic, educational and recreational life of Ypsilanti and they hope that, in the not-far-distant future, sufficient interest will be awakened in the development of the drama as a part of the community life that the people of Ypsilanti will feel that a municipal arts and crafts theater is necessary. In fact, quite a few programs have been repeated, due to the very limited number who can be seated in the play-house at present and the large number that desired to attend. This confirms the belief of the players that a municipal theater seating five or six hundred people would be in use constantly, and they are working with this idea as a goal.

## Opening of Government Irrigated Land for Soldiers and Sailors and the Public

THERE is not the least doubt in the world as to the desire of ex-soldiers and sailors, and people generally, to engage in farming if they can only get the necessary land.

In January announcement was made by the Department of the Interior of the United States Government that additional irrigated farm land in the North Platte and Shoshone government projects in eastern Wyoming and western Nebraska would be thrown open for homestead entry on March 5 and March 13, respectively.

The total amount of land to be thus made available amounts only to 142 farms, each of them ranging in size from 40 to 80 acres. In other words, there are only enough farms on these two projects for 142 more families.

But so hungry are men for the opportunity to become owners of farms that more than 14,000 applications for these 142 farms were received at the Department of the Interior up to this writing, and letters of inquiry for applications were still pouring in at the rate of from 500 to 600 daily. This avalanche of mail was also being supplemented by 25 or 30 telegrams every day.

This means that at the least calculation 15,000 people—mostly soldiers and sailors—are going to be disappointed in their earnest desire to start life on a farm.

Much of this disappointment, however, could be overcome if the Reclamation Service of the Interior Department could secure sufficient funds to complete irrigation facilities on 2,000,000 acres of land now unused on government irrigation projects in the West that are only partially completed.

When it becomes generally known that so many thousands of people are trying to get one of those little

farms in the North Platte and Shoshone projects, it is fair to assume that congressional interest may be sufficiently aroused to provide the necessary funds for completing the different projects, thus opening up 2,000,000 more acres for homestead entry by soldiers and sailors and the public.

Congress has passed a joint resolution providing that for a period of two years, officers, sailors, soldiers or marines who have served in the army or navy of the United States in the war with Germany and have been honorably separated or discharged therefrom or placed in the regular army or naval reserve, shall have a preferred right of entry under the homestead or desert land laws if qualified except as against prior existing valid settlement rights and preference rights, on the opening of public or Indian lands to entry or the restoration to entry of public land theretofore withdrawn from entry. This preferred right of entry is granted for a period of not less than 60 days before the general opening of such lands to the public.

The rights and benefits of this act do not extend to any person who having been drafted for service has refused to render such service or to wear the uniform of the United States.

Accordingly Secretary Lane has applied the provisions of this resolution to the opening of lands on the North Platte and Shoshone projects in Wyoming on March 5 and 13, respectively.

From these dates, the lands will be open to entry by soldiers and sailors only, for a period of 60 days, and any lands not entered in that time will be open thereafter to the general public. The date at which the public may enter lands on the North Platte is May 4, and on the Shoshone May 12, 1920.



(C) Keystone

Latest type of the mines planted by German submarines along the Atlantic Coast. The photo shows the hydrostat, which controls the depth at which the mine floats. These mines float beneath the surface of the water and cannot be seen.